

MERRY CHRISTMAS



REGINA COELI.



AY, did his sisters wonder what could Joseph see In a mild, silent little maid like thee? And was it awful in that narrow house, With God for babe and spouse? Nay, like thy simple, female sort, each one Apt to find Him in Husband and in Son, Nothing to thee came strange in this, Thy wonder was but wondrous bliss; Wondrous, for though True Virgin lives not but does know (Howbeit none ever yet confessed) That God lies really in her breast, Of thine he made his special nest And so, All mothers worship little feet And kiss the very ground they've trod, But, ah, thy little Baby Sweet, Who was indeed thy God!

—Coventry Patmore.



THE GOLDEN LOUIS.

WHEN Lucien de Hem had seen his last 100-franc note raked in by the banker and had risen from the roulette table where he had just lost the remains of his small fortune he experienced a sort of vertigo and almost fell.

With reeling brain and failing limbs he tottered over to the leather bench that encircled the room and threw himself on it. For some minutes he gazed vaguely about this private gambling hell in which he had wasted the best years of his youth, recognizing one by one the plundered heads of the players in the bold glare of the three great green shades. He heard the soft friction of the gold on the felt and realized his loss, his ruin; but he remembered that at home, in a bureau drawer, there were two army pistols which had been bravely used by his father, General De Hem, in the attack of Zaatcha. Then utterly worn out, he slept profoundly.

He awoke with parched throat and glancing at the clock saw that he had barely slept a half hour.

An imperative need to breathe, the night air came over him. The hands marked a quarter to midnight, and on rising and stretching his arms, Lucien recollected that it was Christmas eve, and by an ironical freak of memory he saw himself a little child again putting his shoes in front of the chimney at bedtime.

Just then, old Dronski, the Pole, a fixture of the place, in threadbare, braided livery, came up to Lucien and mouthed a few words in his dirty beard.

"Lend me five francs, Monsieur. Here are two days since I have been out of the club and 17 has not turned up once."

"Laugh at me if you will, but you may cut off my fist if 17 does not come out in a few minutes, when the clock strikes midnight."

Lucien de Hem shrugged his shoulders; he had not even the wherewithal in his pocket to pay the tax known by the house-habitués as "The Pole's Pence."

street, a central one, walled in by high houses, was all white. Multitudes of cold stars shone in the blue-black purged sky.

The ruined man walked rapidly, revolving desperate thoughts in his mind, and was more than ever drawn to the pistol box in his dressing case drawer.

Suddenly he stopped. He was confronted by a heart-breaking scene. On a stone bench, placed according to the old-time custom beside the monumental door of a palace, a little girl of 6 or 7, barely covered by a ragged black frock, was sitting in the snow. She had gone to sleep there, in spite of the cold, in a painful attitude of utter weariness, with her poor little head and shoulder propped in an angle of the icy stone.

One of her old shoes had fallen from the foot which hung over and lay in the snow.

Lucien de Hem felt mechanically for his vest pocket, and was suddenly reminded that a moment before he had not even found a forgotten franc, nor a pourboire for the valet.

However, stirred by an instinctive pity, he approached the little girl, and would perhaps have carried her in his arms to give her a night shelter, had he not seen something shining in the old shoe as it lay in the snow.

He bent over. It was a gold louis. Some charitable person, a woman, doubtless, in passing by this Christmas eve had seen the shoe in front of the sleeping child, and had remembered the touching legend. This generous alms had been given so that the little one might believe in the gifts of the holy child, and in spite of her distress retain some hope in the goodness of Providence.

A louis! It meant many days of plenty for the beggar, and Lucien was about to waken and tell her so, when he heard a voice in his ear, a drawing, thick voice, mumbling:

"Here are two days since I have been out of the club. You can cut off my fist if 17 does not come out when the clock strikes midnight."

Then the young man of 23, coming of honest stock with a magnificent military record, never failing in honor, this young man suddenly conceived a dreadful thought, fell prey to a wild, hysterical, monstrous desire. Assuring himself with one glance that the street was deserted he swiftly stooped, advanced a trembling hand, and stole the louis from the old shoe. With a wild rush he reached the club again, cleared the stairs in one impetuous rush, flung open the door of the reeking hall, and threw the gold piece on the green, just as the clock chimed the first stroke of midnight.

"All on 17!" Seventeen won.

With a turn of his hand he shoved the 36 louis on red.

Red won.

He left 72 louis on the same color. Again it appeared. Three times he put up the doubled stakes with the same luck. There was now a great heap of gold and bank notes in front of him, and he began frantically to sow them broadcast over the table. Every combination favored him. The little ivory ball jumping about the divisions of the roulette seemed to be magnetized by the gambler's gaze, and obeyed it. In 10 plays he had recovered the few thousand francs, his last resource, that he had lost early in the evening. By putting 200 or 300 louis at once he would soon have far more than the heritage he had fooled away.

In his haste to play he had kept on his heavy coat, and the great pockets were already crammed with rolls of bank notes and gold pieces. He now had to stuff them into his inside pockets, his vest and trouser pockets, his cigar case, his handkerchief, and everything that could hold them. He still played. He still won; like a lunatic, like a drunken man! He threw the gold anywhere on the table with disdainful certainty.

In his heart a red-hot iron was burning; he thought only of the child asleep in the snow; of the little beggar he had robbed.

"She is still there, of course; certainly, she must be there! In a minute, when it strikes 1—1 swear it—I

will leave here and carry her home sleeping in my arms. I will bring her up, love her as my own child, and care for her always, always."

The clock struck 1, the quarter, the half, the three-quarters, and Lucien still sat at the table. A minute before 2 the banker rose abruptly and said in a sharp voice:

"Enough for the day, gentlemen; the bank is closed."

Lucien leaped to his feet. Roughly he pushed the players aside as they lingered about, eyeing him with envious admiration; hurriedly he cleared the stairs and ran to the stone bench.

"Thank God!" he cried; "she is still there!" He seized her hand.

"Ah! how cold she is, poor little one!"

As he lifted her in his arms the child's head fell back limp, and she did not waken. How children sleep, he thought, pressing her to his breast for warmth; and, vaguely anxious, he was about to kiss her lids to draw her from this heavy slumber, when he saw with terror that the child's eyes were half open, showing glassy pupils, extinguished and motionless. With terrible suspicion Lucien brushed her little lips with his own, and no breath came from them. While Lucien had been winning a fortune with the louis stolen from her, this little beggar had died of cold. His throat contracted in awful agony. He tried to cry out * * * and in the effort—he awoke from a nightmare on the bench at the club, where he had fallen asleep before midnight, and had been left undisturbed by the kindness of the old valet, who had gone off last of all at 5 o'clock. His heart had been touched by the poor bankrupt.

A noisy December dawn was peering through the panes. Lucien went out, pawed his watch, bathed, breakfasted, then went to the recruiting office, where he enlisted in the First African Chasseurs.

Lucien de Hem is now a lieutenant; he lives on his small pay and never touches a card.

It appears that he saves something, too, for not long ago, in Algiers, he was seen by a brother officer who was walking behind him in a winding street of the Kasha giving alms to a little Span-



HE APPROACHED THE LITTLE GIRL.

ish beggar asleep under a doorway. The officer had the indiscretion to look at the money which Lucien had given to poverty.

He had put a gold louis in the child's hand.

In Excelsis Gloria. (A hymn dating from the 13th century.)

Christ is born of maiden fair; Hark! the heralds in the air! Thus adoring hear them there, "In excelsis gloria!"

Shepherds saw those angels bright, Carolling in glorious light; God, His Son, is born tonight, In excelsis gloria!

Christ is come to save mankind, As in holy page we find, Therefore sing with reverent mind, In excelsis gloria!

A Prince an Electrician. Prince Victor Emmanuel of Naples is said to be an expert electrician. He experiments on all its applications to light, sound, motive power, and photography, and was one of the first persons in Italy to investigate the Roentgen rays.

TALMAGE'S SERMON.

"GEOLOGY OF BIBLE" SUN-DAY'S SUBJECT.

"And When They Came to Nachon's Threshing Floor Uzzah Put Forth His Hand to the Ark of God"—II. Samuel: Chapter VI., Verses 6 and 7.



BAND of music is coming down the road, corners blown, timbrels struck, harps thrummed, and cymbals clapped, all led on by David, who was himself a musician. They are ahead of a wagon on which is the sacred box called the "Ark." The yoke of oxen drawing the wagon imperiled it. Some critics say that the oxen kicked, being struck with the driver's goad, but my knowledge of oxen leads me to say that if on a hot day they see a shadow of a tree or wall they are apt to suddenly shy off to get the coolness of the shadow. I think these oxen so suddenly turned that the sacred box seemed about to upset and be thrown to the ground. Uzzah rushed forward and laid hold of the ark to keep it upright. But he had no right to do so. A special command had been given by the Lord that no one, save the priest, under any circumstances, should touch the box. Nervous, and excited, and irreverent, Uzzah disobeyed when he took hold of the ark, and he died as a consequence. In all ages, and never more so than in our own day, there are good people all the time afraid that the Holy Bible, which is the second ark of our time, will be upset, and they have been a long while afraid that science, and especially geology, would overthrow it. While we are not forbidden to touch the Holy Book, and, on the contrary, are urged to fondle and study it, any one who is afraid of the overthrow of the Book is greatly offending the Lord with his unbelief. The oxen have not yet been yoked which can upset that ark of the world's salvation. Written by the Lord Almighty, he is going to protect it until its mission is fulfilled, and there shall be no more need of a Bible, because all its prophecies will have been fulfilled and the human race will have exchanged worlds. A trumpet and a violin are very different instruments, but they may be played in perfect accord. So the Bible account of the creation of the world and the geological account are different. One story written on parchment and the other on the rocks, and yet in perfect and eternal accord. The word "day," repeated in the first chapter of Genesis, has thrown into paroxysms of criticism many exegetes. The Hebrew word "Yom" of the Bible means sometimes what we call a day, and sometimes it means ages; it may mean twenty-four hours or a hundred million years. The order of creation as written in the Book of Genesis is the order of creation discovered by geologists' crowbar. So many Uzzahs have been nervously rushing about for fear the strong oxen of scientific discovery would upset the Bible that I went somewhat apprehensively to look into the matter, when I found that the Bible and geology agree in saying that first were built the rocks; then the plants greened the earth; then marine creatures were created, from minnow to whale; then the wings and throats of aerial choirs were colored and tuned, and the quadrupeds began to bleat, and bellow, and neigh. What is all this fuss that has been billing the church and the world concerning a fight between Moses and Agassiz? There is no fight at all. But is not the geological impression that the world was millions of years building antagonistic to the theory of one week's creation in Genesis? No. A great house is to be built. A man takes years to draw to the spot the foundation stone and the heavy timbers. The house is about done, but it is not finished for comfortable residence. Suddenly the owner calls in upholsterers, plumbers, gas fitters, paper hangers, and in one week it is ready for occupancy. Now, it requires no stretch of imagination to realize that God could have taken millions of years for the bringing of the rocks and the timbers of this world together, yet only one week more to make it inhabitable and to furnish it for human residence. Remember, also, that all up and down the Bible the language of the times was used—common parlance—and it was not always to be taken literally. Just as we say every day that the world is round, when it is not round. It is spheroidal—flattened at the poles and protuberant at the equator. Professor Snell, with his chain of triangles, and Professor Varin with the shortened pendulum of his clock, found it was not round; but we do not become critical of any one who says the world is round.

But you do not really believe that story of the deluge and the sinking of the mountains under the wave? Tell us something we can believe. "Believe that," says geology, "for how do you account for those sea shells and sea weeds and skeletons of sea animals found on the top of some of the highest mountains? If the waters did not sometimes rise above the mountains, how did those sea shells and sea weeds and skeletons of sea animals get there? Did you put them there?"

But, now, do you not really believe that story about the storm of fire and brimstone whelming Sodom and Gomorrah, and enveloping Lot's wife in such saline encrustations that she halted a sack of salt? For the confirmation of that story the geologist goes to that region, and after trying in vain to take a swim in the lake, so thick with salt he can not swim it—the lake beneath which Sodom and Gomorrah lie buried—one drop of the water so full of sulphur and brimstone that it stings your tongue, and for hours you can not get rid of the nauseating drop—the scientist then digging down and finding sulphur on top of sulphur, brimstone on top of brimstone, while all round there are jets, and crags, and peaks of salt, and if one of them did not become the sarcophagus of Lot's wife, they show you how a human being might in that tempest have been halted and packed into a white monument that would defy the ages.

But now, you do not really believe that New Testament story about the earthquake at the time Christ was crucified, do you? Geology digs down into Mount Calvary and finds the rocks ruptured and aslant, showing the work of an especial earthquake for that mountain, and an earthquake which did not touch the surrounding region. Go and look for yourself, and see there a dip and cleavage of rocks as nowhere else on the planet. Geology thus announcing an especial earthquake for the greatest tragedy of all the centuries—the assassination of the Son of God.

If anything in the history or condition of the earth seems for the time contradictory of anything in geology, you must remember that geology is all the time correcting itself, and more and more coming to harmonization with the great Book. In the last century the "French Scientific Association" printed a list of eighty theories of geology which had been adopted and afterward rejected. Lyell, the scientist, announced fifty theories of geology that had been believed in and afterwards thrown overboard. Meanwhile the story of the Bible has not changed at all, and if geology has cast out between one and two hundred theories which it once considered established, we can afford to wait until the last theory of geology antagonizing divine revelation shall have been given up. Now, in this discourse upon the geology of the Bible, or God among the Rocks, I charge all agitated and affrighted Uzzahs to calm their pulses about the upsetting of the Scriptures. Let me see! For several hundred years the oxen have been jerking the ark this way and that, and pulling it over rough places and trying to stick it in the mud of derision, and kicking with all the power of their hoofs against the sharp goads, and trying to pull it into the cool shade away from the heats of retribution from a God "who will by no means clear the guilty." Yet have you not noticed that the Book has never been upset? The only changes made in it were by its learned friends in the revision of the Scriptures. The book of Genesis has been thundered against by the mightiest batteries, yet you cannot today find in all the earth a copy of the Bible which has not the fifty chapters of the first copy of the book of Genesis ever printed, starting with the words, "In the beginning, God," and closing with Joseph's coffin. Pierce attack on the book of Exodus has been made because they said it was cruel to drown Pharaoh, and the story of Mount Sinai was improbable. But the book of Exodus remains intact, and not one of us, considering the cruelties which he would have continued among the brick kilns of Egypt, would have thrown Pharaoh a plank if we had seen him drowning, and Mount Sinai is today a pile of tossed and tumbled basalt, recalling the cataclysm of that mountain when the law was given. And, as to those Ten Commandments, all Roman law, all German law, all English law, all American law worth anything are squarely founded on them. So mighty assault for centuries has been made on the Book of Joshua. It was said that the story of the detained sun and moon is an insult to modern astronomy; but that Book of Joshua may be found today in the chapel of every university in America, in defiance of any telescope projected from the roof of that university. The Book of Jonah has been the target of ridicule for the small wit of ages; but there it stands, with its four chapters inviolate, while Geology puts up in its museums remains of sea monsters capable of doing more than the one which swallowed the recalcitrant prophet. There stand the one thousand and eighty-nine chapters of the Bible, notwithstanding all the attacks of ages, and there they will stand until they shrivel up in the final fires, which geologists say are already kindled and glow hotter than the furnaces of an ocean steamer as it puts out from New York Narrows for Hamburg or Southampton. I should not wonder if from the crypt of ancient cities the inspired manuscripts of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, in their own chronography, would be taken, and the epistles which Paul dictated to his amanuensis, as well as the one in the apostle's own hand-writing. At the same ratio of archaeological and geological confirmation of the Scriptures, the time will come when the truth of the Bible will no more be doubted than the common almanac, which tells you the days and the months of the year, and the unbelievers will be accounted harmless lunatics. Forward the telescope and the spectroscopic and the chemical batteries, and critically examine the ostracods of the ocean depths and the bones of the great mammals on the gravelly hill-tops! And the mightier, and the grander, and the deeper, and the higher the explorations the better for our cause. As sure as the thunderbolts of the Almighty are stronger than the steel pens of agnostics, the ark of God will ride on unhurt, and Uzzah need not fear any disasters upsetting. The apocalyptic angel flying through the midst of heaven, proclaiming to all

nations, and kindred, and people, and tongues the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ are mightier than the shying off of a yoke of oxen. * * *

How much the rocks have had to do with the cause of God in all ages! In the wilderness God's Israel were fed with honey out of the rock. How the rock of Horeb paid Moses back in gushing, rippling, sparkling water for the two stout strokes with which he struck it! And there stands the rock with name—I guess the longest word in the Bible—sela-hammahlekoth, and it was worthy of a resounding, sesquipedalian nomenclature, for at that rock Saul was compelled to quit his pursuit of David and go home and look after the Philistines, who were making a flank movement. There were the rocks of Bozoz and Seneh, between which Jonathan climbed up and sent flying in retreat the garrison of the uncircumcised. And yonder see David and his men hidden in the rock of Adullam and Engedi!

Concerning all the vast things of God's government of the universe, be patient with the carrying out of plans beyond our measurement. Naturalists tell us that there are insects that are born and die within an hour, and that there are several generations of them in one day; and if one of those July insects of an hour should say, "How slow everything goes! I was told in the chrysalis state by a wondrous instinct that I would find in this world seasons of the year—spring, summer, autumn and winter. But where are the autumnal forests upholstered in fire, and where are the glorious spring-times, with orchards waving their censers of perfume before the altars of the morning? I do not believe there are any autumns or spring-times." If then a golden eagle, many years old, in a cage nearby, heard the hum of that complaining insect, it might well answer: "O, summer insect of an hour, though your life is so short you can not see the magnificent turn of the seasons, I can testify as to their reality, for I have seen them roll. When I was young, and before I was imprisoned in this cage, I brushed their gorgeous foliage and their fragrant blossoms with my own wing. You live an hour; I have lived thirty years. But in one of my flights high up, the gate of heaven open for a soul to go in or a seraph to come out, I heard the choirs chanting, 'From everlasting to everlasting thou art God!' And it was an antiphonal in which all heaven responded, 'From everlasting to everlasting thou art God.' O, man! O, woman! so far as your earthly existence is concerned, only the insect of an hour, be not impatient with the workings of the Omnipotent and the Eternal.

And now, for your solace and your safety, I ask you to come under the shelter, and into the deep clefts, and the almighty defense of a Rock that is higher than you, higher than any Gibraltar, higher than the Himalayas—the "Rock of Ages"—that will shelter you from the storm, that will hide you from your enemies, that will stand when the earthquakes of the last day get their pry under the mountains and hurl them into seas boiling with the fires which are already burning their way out from red-hot centers toward the surfaces which are already here and there spouting with fire amid the quaking of the mountains, under the look and touch of him, of whom it is said in the sublimest sentence ever written: "He looketh upon the mountains, and they tremble: He toucheth the hills and they smoke!"

He you one and all to the Rock of Ages! And, now, as before this sermon on the Rocks I gave out the significant and appropriate hymn, "How firm a foundation ye saints of the Lord," I will give out after this sermon on the Rocks the significant and appropriate hymn:

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee!

WOMEN AND THE BIRDS.

Why Will They Not Sacrifice Their Vanity for Humanity's Sake?

"As there is no argument on the side of bird killing for decorative purposes, so there is no excuse for its encouragement by even the most frivolous of women," the St. Paul Pioneer Press says. "They have presented to them over and over and in every form of appeal the cruelty of the custom as well as its reckless abuse of the gifts of nature, for it is asserted on good authority that the destruction of the field and forest birds has an appreciable effect on agriculture. Yet the killing goes on, apparently with no diminution. Europe uses 300,000,000 of song birds in millinery annually. One Chicago firm buys and sells every year 62,000 birds and 300,000 wings. The pitiful story of the egret, whose ravished plumes wave from the hats of thousands of wealthy women and are shown every day in our own shop windows here in St. Paul, has been told so many times that it would seem as though the woman who persists in wearing them must feel like a murderer every time she does so.

"We do not need societies, pledges, orations or tracts on this subject. The matter is one which rests on a purely commercial basis. The leaders of fashion in any city can settle it practically in one season. They have only to refuse to wear these trophies of cruelty and the thing is done. It does not even require 'strong-mindedness' to do this. One would think that a mere spark of humanity in the heart would be the only requisite. Women, young or old, rich or poor, who think themselves anxious to help along the cause of humanity can do it no more easily or effectively than in this way. It is a gracious mission and one in which the only sacrifice involved is of a very little personal vanity."